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CANADA'S NEW GOVERNMENT INVESTS $4.2 MILLION IN WATER TREATMENT PLANT AT MASHTEUIATSH

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Mashteuiatsh (Quebec), June 21, 2007 - The Honourable Jim Prentice, Minister of Indian Affairs and Northern Development and Federal Interlocutor for Métis and Non-Status Indians, and Gilbert Dominique, Chief of the Mashteuiatsh Band Council, today inaugurated the new water treatment plant of the Innu community of Mashteuiatsh.

"Ensuring that First Nations communities have clean water is one of my top priorities," said Minister Prentice. "The ultimate goal is to make sure that First Nations residents enjoy the same protection afforded other Canadians when it comes to drinking water."

The majority of the funding for construction of the water treatment facility was provided by Indian and Northern Affairs Canada (INAC) which provided $4.2 million for the project. The community has invested another $1.2 million. As well, the community of Mashteuiatsh supervised the project from start to finish, in collaboration of the Conseil tribal Mamuitun and various specialists in the water supply/treatment sector.

Mashteuiatsh's new drinking water plant produces water of a quality complying with the standards under the Protocol for Safe Drinking Water in First Nations Communities and the standards enacted under Quebec's Regulation respecting the Quality of drinking water. These standards are met through a combination of physicochemical treatment and effective granular filtration, followed by disinfection of water using chlorine and ultraviolet radiation.

Thanks to the new facility, it is anticipated that the community's water consumption needs can be satisfied for the next 20 years. In addition to the new purification equipment, work was completed expanding the underground drinking water reservoir.

On March 21, 2006, Minister Prentice announced a Plan of Action for water quality on First Nations, which includes implementation of a Protocol for Safe Drinking Water for First Nations Communities and mandatory training for all water treatment plant operators, and a regime to ensure that all water systems have the oversight of certified operators.

Located at Lac-Saint-Jean, Mashteuiatsh is an Innu community with 4,783 registered members, including 2,022 who live on the reserve.

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